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## SEXUAL EDUCATION AND NAKEDNESS<sup>1</sup>

By HAVELOCK ELLIS

What is the psychological influence of familiarity with nakedness? How far should children be made familiar with the naked body? This is a question in regard to which different opinions have been held in different ages, and during recent years a remarkable change has begun to come over the minds of practical educationalists in regard to it.

In Sparta, in Chios, and elsewhere in Greece, women at one time practised gymnastic feats and dances in nakedness, together with the men, or in their presence. Plato in his *Republic* approved of such customs and said that the ridicule of those who laughed at them was but "unripe fruit plucked from the tree of knowledge." On many questions Plato's opinions changed, but not on this. In the *Laws*, which are the last outcome of his philosophic reflection in old age, he still advocates the co-education of the sexes, and their co-operation in all the works of life, in part with a view to blunt the over-keen edge of sexual appetite; with the same object he advocated the association together of youths and girls without constraint in costumes which offered no concealment to the form.

It is noteworthy that the Romans, a coarser-grained people than the Greeks, and in our narrow modern sense more "moral," showed no perception of the moralizing and refining influence of nakedness. Nudity to them was merely a licentious indulgence, to be treated with contempt even when it was enjoyed. It was confined to the stage, and clamored for by the popu-

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<sup>1</sup>The present article forms a chapter in the sixth and final volume of the author's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, "Sex in Relation to Society." (F. A. Davis & Co., Phila., Publishers.)

lace. In the Floralia, especially, the crowd seem to have claimed it as their right that the actors should play naked, probably, it has been thought, as a survival of a folk-ritual. But the Romans, though they were eager to run to the theatre, felt nothing but disdain for the performers. "Flagitii principium est, nudare inter cives corpora." So thought old Ennius, as reported by Cicero, and that remained the genuine Roman feeling to the last. "Quanta perversitas!" as Tertullian exclaimed, "Artem magnificent, artificem notant." In this matter the Romans, although they aroused the horror of the Christians, were yet in reality laying the foundation of Christian morality.

Christianity, which found so many of Plato's opinions congenial, would have nothing to do with his view of nakedness and failed to recognize its psychological correctness. The reason was simple, and indeed simple-minded. The Church was passionately eager to fight against what it called "the flesh," and thus fell into the error of confusing the subjective question of sexual desire with the objective spectacle of the naked form. "The flesh" is evil, therefore "the flesh" must be hidden. And they hid it without understanding that in so doing they had not suppressed the craving for the human form, but on the contrary had heightened it by imparting to it the additional fascination of a forbidden mystery.

Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Part III, Sect. II, Mem. II, Subs. IV), referring to the recommendation of Plato, adds: "But *Eusebius* and *Theodoret* worthily lash him for it; and well they might: for as one saith, the very sight of naked parts causeth enormous, exceeding concupiscences, and stirs up both men and women to burning lust." Yet, as Burton himself adds further on in the same section of his work (Mem. v. Subs. iii), without protest, "Some are of opinion, that to see a woman naked is able of itself to alter his affection; and it is worthy of consideration, saith *Montaigne* the Frenchman in his Essays, that the skillfullest masters of amorous dalliance appoint for a remedy of venereous passions, a full survey of the body."

There ought to be no question regarding the fact that it is the adorned, the partially concealed body, and not the absolutely naked body which acts as a sexual excitant. I have brought together some evidence on this point in the study of "The Evolution of Modesty." It is now generally held that one of the chief primary causes of ornament and clothing was the desire to arouse sexual desire, and artists' models are well aware that when they are completely unclothed they are most safe from undesired masculine advances. "A favorite model of mine told me," remarks Dr. Shufeldt (*Medical Brief*, Oct.,

1904), the distinguished author of *Studies of the Human Form*, "that it was her practice to disrobe as soon after entering the artist's studio as possible, for, as men are not always responsible for their emotions, she felt that she was far less likely to arouse or excite them when entirely nude than when only semi-draped." This fact is, indeed, quite familiar to artists' models. If the conquest of sexual desire were the first and last consideration of life it would be more reasonable to prohibit clothing than to prohibit nakedness.

When Christianity absorbed the whole of the European world this strict avoidance of even the sight of "the flesh," although nominally accepted by all as the desirable ideal, could only be carried out, thoroughly and completely, in the cloister. In the practice of the world outside, although the original Christian ideals remained influential, various pagan and primitive traditions in favor of nakedness still persisted and were to some extent allowed to manifest themselves, alike in ordinary custom and on special occasions.

How widespread is the occasional or habitual practice of nakedness in the world generally, and how entirely concordant it is with even a most sensitive modesty has been set forth in "The Evolution of Modesty," in Vol. I of these *Studies*.

Even during the Christian era the impulse to adopt nudity, often with the feeling that it was an especially sacred practice, has persisted. The Adamites of the second century, who read and prayed naked, and celebrated the sacrament naked, according to the statement quoted by St. Augustine, seem to have caused little scandal so long as they only practised nudity in their sacred ceremonies. The French Picards at a much later date insisted on public nakedness believing that God had sent their leader into the world as a new Adam to re-establish the law of nature; they were persecuted and were finally exterminated by the Hussites.

In daily life, however, a considerable degree of nakedness was tolerated during mediæval times. This was notably so in the public baths frequented by men and women together. Thus Alwin Schultz remarks (in his *Höfisches Leben zur Zeit der Minnesänger*), that the women of the aristocratic classes, though not the men, were often naked in these baths except for a hat and a necklace.

It is sometimes stated that in the mediæval religious plays Adam and Eve were absolutely naked. Chambers doubts this and thinks they wore flesh-colored tights, or were as in a later play of this kind "apparelled in white leather". (E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*, vol. I, p. 5). It may be so, but the public exposure even of the sexual organs was permitted, and that in aristocratic houses, for John of Salisbury

(in a passage quoted by Buckle, *Commonplace Book*, 541) protests against this custom.

The women of the feminist sixteenth century in France, as R. de Maulde la Claviere remarks (*Revue de l'Art*, January, 1898), had no scruple in recompensing their adorers by admitting them to their toilette or even their bath. Late in the century they became still less prudish, and many well-known ladies allowed themselves to be painted naked down to the waist, as we see in the portrait of Gabrielle d'Estrées au Bain, at Chantilly. Many of these pictures, however, are certainly not real portraits.

Even in the middle of the seventeenth century in England nakedness was not prohibited in public for Pepys tells us that on the 29th July, 1667 a Quaker came into Westminster Hall crying "Repent! Repent!" being in a state of nakedness except that he was "very civilly tied about the privities to avoid scandal"

In a Chapter "De la Nudité" and in the appendices of his book *De l'Amour* (vol. I, p. 221) Senancour gives instances of the occasional practice of nudity in Europe and adds some interesting remarks of his own.

The movement of revolt against nakedness never became completely victorious until the nineteenth century. That century represented the triumph of all the forces that banned public nakedness everywhere and altogether. If, as Puda insists, nakedness is aristocratic and the slavery of clothes a plebeian characteristic imposed on the lower classes by an upper class who reserved to themselves the privilege of physical culture, we may perhaps connect this with the outburst of democratic plebeianism which, as Nietzsche pointed out, reached its climax in the nineteenth century. It is in any case certainly interesting to observe that by this time the movement had entirely changed its character. It had become general, but at the same time its foundation had been undermined. It had largely lost its religious and moral character and instead was regarded as a matter of convention. The nineteenth century men who encountered the spectacle of white limbs flashing in the sunlight no longer felt like the mediæval ascetic that he was risking the salvation of his immortal soul or even courting the depravation of his morals; he merely felt that it was "indecent" or, in extreme cases, "disgusting". That is to say he regarded the matter as simply a question of conventional etiquette, at the worst, of taste, of æsthetics. In thus bringing down his repugnance to nakedness to so low a plane he had indeed rendered it generally acceptable, but at the same time he had deprived it of high sanction. His profound horror of nakedness was out of relation to the frivolous grounds on which he based it.

We must not, however, underrate the tenacity with which this horror of nakedness was held. Nothing illustrates more vividly the deeply ingrained hatred which the nineteenth century felt of nakedness than the ferocity—there is no other word for it—with which Christian missionaries to savages all over the world, even in the tropics, insisted on their converts adopting the conventional clothing of Northern Europe. Travellers' narratives abound in references to the emphasis placed by missionaries on this change of custom, which was both injurious to the health of the people and degrading to their dignity. It is sufficient to quote one authoritative witness, Lord Stanmore, former Governor of Fiji, who read a long paper to the Anglican Missionary Conference in 1894 on the subject of "Undue Introduction of Western Ways." "In the centre of the village," he remarked in quoting a typical case, "is the church, a wooden barn-like building. If the day be Sunday we shall find the native minister arrayed in a greenish-black swallow-tail coat, a neckcloth, once white, and a pair of spectacles, which he probably does not need, preaching to a congregation the male portion of which is dressed in much the same manner as himself, while the women are dizenized out in old battered hats or bonnets, and shapeless gowns like bathing dresses, or it may be in crinolines of an early type. Chiefs of influence and women of high birth, who in their native dress would look, and do look, the ladies and gentlemen they are, are by their Sunday finery given the appearance of attendants upon Jack-in-the-green. If a visit be paid to the houses of the town, after the morning's work of the people is over, the family will be found sitting on chairs, listless and uncomfortable, in a room full of litter. In the houses of the superior native clergy, there will be a yet greater aping of the manners of the West. There will be chairs covered with hideous antimacassars, tasteless round worsted-work mats for absent flower jars, and a lot of ugly, cheap, and vulgar china chimney ornaments, which, there being no fireplace and consequently no chimney piece, are set out in order on a rickety deal table. The whole life of these village folk is one piece of unreal acting. They are continually asking themselves whether they are incurring any of the penalties entailed by infraction of the long table of prohibitions, and whether they are living up to the foreign garments they wear. Their faces have for the most part an expression of sullen discontent, they move about silently and joylessly, rebels in heart to the restrictive code on them, but which they fear to cast off, partly from a vague apprehension of possible secular results, and partly because they suppose they will cease to be good Christians if they do so. They have good ground for their dissatisfaction. At the

time when I visited the villages I have specially in my eye, it was punishable by fine and imprisonment to wear native clothing, punishable by fine and imprisonment to wear long hair or a garland of flowers; punishable by fine and imprisonment to wrestle or to play at ball; punishable by fine and imprisonment to build a native-fashioned house; punishable not to wear shirt and trousers, and in certain localities coat and shoes also; and, in addition to laws enforcing a strictly puritanical observation of the Sabbath, it was punishable by fine and imprisonment to bathe on Sundays. In some other places bathing on Sunday was punishable by flogging; and to my knowledge women have been flogged for no other offence. Men in such circumstances are ripe for revolt, and sometimes the revolt comes."

An obvious result of reducing the feeling about nakedness to an unreasoning but imperative convention is the tendency to prudishness. This, as we know, is a form of pseudo-modesty which, being a convention, and not a natural feeling, is capable of unlimited extension. It is by no means confined to modern times or to Christian Europe. The Turks are capable of prudishness. So indeed were even the ancient Greeks. "Dion the philosopher tells us," remarks Clement of Alexandria (*Stromates*' Bk. IV, ch. 19), "that a certain woman Lysidica, through excess of modesty, bathed in her clothes, and that Philotera, when she was to enter the bath, gradually drew back her tunic as the water covered her naked parts; and then rising by degrees, put it on." Mincing prudes were found among the early Christians and their ways are graphically described by St. Jeremy in one of his Letters. Whenever a new and artificial "modesty" is imposed upon savages prudery tends to arise. Haddon describes this among the natives of Torres Straits, where even the children now suffer from exaggerated prudishness, though formerly absolutely naked and unashamed. (*Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, vol. V, p. 271.)

The nineteenth century, which witnessed the triumph of timidity and prudery in this matter, also produced the first fruitful germ of new conceptions of nakedness. To some extent these were embodied in the great romantic movement. Rousseau indeed had placed no special insistence on nakedness as an element of the return to Nature which he preached so influentially. A new feeling in this matter emerged, however, with characteristic extravagance, in some of the episodes of the Revolution, while in Germany in the pioneering *Lucinde* of Friedrich Schlegel, a characteristic figure in the Romantic movement, a still unfamiliar conception of nakedness was set forth in a serious and earnest spirit.

In England, Blake with his strange and flaming genius, proclaimed a mystical gospel which involved the spiritual glorification of the body and contempt for the civilized worship of clothes ("As to a modern man," he wrote, "stripped from his load of clothing he is like a dead corpse"); while later in America Thoreau and Whitman and Burroughs asserted, still more definitely, a not dissimilar message concerning the need of returning to Nature.

We find the importance of the sight of the body—though very narrowly, for the avoidance of fraud, in the preliminaries of marriage—set forth as early as the sixteenth century, by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*, which is so rich in new and fruitful ideas. In *Utopia*, according to Sir Thomas More, before marriage, a staid and honest matron "showeth the woman, be she maid or widow, naked to the wooer. And likewise a sage and discreet man exhibiteth the wooer naked to the woman. At this custom we laughed and disallowed it as foolish. But they on their part do greatly wonder at the folly of all other nations which in buying a colt, where a little money is in hazard, be so chary and circumspect that though he be almost all bare, yet they will not buy him unless the saddle and all the harness be taken off, lest under these coverings be hid some gall or sore. And yet in choosing a wife, which shall be either pleasure or displeasure to them all their life after, they be so reckless that all the residue of the woman's body being covered with clothes, they estimate her scarcely by one hands-breadth (for they can see no more but her face) and so join her to them not without great jeopardy of evil agreeing together, if anything in her body afterward should chance to offend or mislike them. Verily so foul deformity may be hid under these coverings that it may quite alienate and take away the man's mind from his wife, when it shall not be lawful for their bodies to be separate again. If such deformity happen by any chance after their marriage is consummate and finished, well, there is no remedy but patience. But it were well done that a law were made whereby all such deceits were eschewed and avoided beforehand."

The clear conception of what may be called the spiritual value of nakedness—by no means from More's point of view, but as a part of natural hygiene in the widest sense, and as a high and special aspect of the purifying and ennobling function of beauty—is of much later date. It is not clearly expressed until the time of the Romantic Movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We have it admirably set forth in Senancour's *De l'Amour* (first edition 1806; fourth and enlarged edition 1834), which still remains one of the best books on the morality of love. After remarking that nakedness by



no means abolishes modesty, he proceeds to advocate occasional partial or complete nudity. "Let us suppose," he remarks, somewhat in the spirit of Plato, "a country in which at certain general festivals the women should be absolutely free to be nearly or even quite naked. Swimming, waltzing, walking, those who thought good to do so might remain unclothed in the presence of men. No doubt the illusions of love would be little known, and passion would see a diminution of its transports. But is it passion that in general ennoble human affairs? We need honest attachments and delicate delights, and all these we may obtain while still preserving our common sense. . . . Such nakedness would demand corresponding institutions, strong and simple, and a great respect for those conventions which belong to all times." (Senancour, *De l'Amour*, vol. I, p. 314.)

From that time onwards references to the value and desirability of nakedness become more and more frequent in all civilized countries, sometimes mingled with sarcastic allusions to the false conventions we have inherited in this matter. Thus Thoreau writes in his Journal on 12th June, 1852, as he looks at boys bathing in the river: "The color of their bodies in the sun at a distance is pleasing. I hear the sound of their sport borne over the water. As yet we have not man in Nature. What a singular fact for an angel visitant to this earth to carry back in his note-book, that men were forbidden to expose their bodies under the severest penalties!" Yevan Bloch, in Chapter VII of his *Sexual Life of our Times* discusses this question of nakedness from the modern point of view, and concludes: "A natural conception of nakedness: that is the watchword of the future. All the hygienic, æsthetic and moral efforts of our time are pointing in that direction."

Stratz, as befits one who has worked so strenuously in the cause of human health and beauty, admirably sets forth the stage which we have now attained in this matter. After pointing out (*Die Frauenkleidung*, 3rd ed. 1904, p. 30) that, in opposition to the pagan world which worshipped naked gods, Christianity developed the idea that nakedness was merely sexual and therefore immoral, he proceeds: "But over all glimmered on the heavenly heights of the cross, the naked body of the Saviour. Under that protection there has gradually disengaged itself from the confusion of ideas a new transfigured form of nakedness made free after long struggle. I would call this *artistic nakedness*, for as it was immortalized by the old Greeks through art, so also among us it has been awakened to new life by art. Artistic nakedness is in its nature much higher than either the natural or the sensual conception of nakedness. The simple child of nature sees in nakedness

nothing at all; the clothed man sees in the uncovered body only a sensual irritation. But at the highest standpoint man consciously returns to nature, and recognizes that under the manifold coverings of human fabrication there is hidden the most splendid creature that God has created. One may stand in silent worshipping wonder before the sight; another may be impelled to imitate and show to his fellowman what in that holy moment he has seen. But both enjoy the spectacle of human beauty with full consciousness and enlightened purity of thought."

It was not, however, so much on these more spiritual sides, but on the side of hygiene, that the nineteenth century furnished its chief practical contribution to the new attitude towards nakedness.

Lord Monboddo, the Scotch judge, who was a pioneer in regard to many modern ideas, had already in the eighteenth century realized the hygienic value of "air baths" and he invented that now familiar name. "Lord Monboddo," says Boswell in 1777 (*Life of Johnson*, edited by Hill, vol. III, p. 168) "told me that he awaked every morning at four, and then for his health got up and walked in his room naked, with the window open, which he called taking *an air bath*." It is said also, I know not on what authority, that he made his beautiful daughters take an air-bath naked on the terrace every morning. Another distinguished man of the same century, Benjamin Franklin, used sometimes to work naked in his study on hygienic grounds, and, it is recorded, once affrighted a servant girl by opening the door, in an absent-minded moment, thus unattired.

Rikli seems to have been the apostle of air baths and sun baths regarded as a systematic method. He established light and air-baths, over half a century ago, at Trieste and elsewhere in Austria. His motto was: "Light, Truth and Freedom are the motive forces towards the highest development of physical and moral health." Man is not a fish, he declared, light and air are the first conditions of a highly organized life. Solaria for the treatment of a number of different disordered conditions are now commonly established and most systems of natural therapeutics attach prime importance to light and air, while in medicine generally it is beginning to be recognized that such influences can by no means be neglected. Dr. Fernand Sandoz, in his *Introduction à la Thérapeutique Naturiste par les agents Physiques et Dietétiques* (1907) sets forth such methods comprehensively. In Germany sun-baths have become widely common; thus Lenkei (in a paper summarized in British Medical Journal, 31. Oct. 1908) prescribes them with much benefit in tuberculosis, rheumatic conditions, obesity, anæ-

mia, neurasthenia, etc. He considers that their peculiar value lies in the action of light. Professor J. N. Hyde, of Chicago, even believes "Light-Hunger in the Production of Psoriasis," *British Medical Journal*, 6. Oct. 1906) that psoriasis is caused by deficiency of sunlight and is best cured by the application of light. This belief, which has not, however, been generally accepted in its unqualified form, he ingeniously supports by the fact that psoriasis tends to appear on the most exposed parts of the body, which may be held to naturally receive and require the maximum of light, and by the absence of the disease in hot countries and among negroes.

The hygienic value of nakedness is indicated by the robust health of the savage throughout the world who go naked. The vigor of the Irish, also, has been connected with the fact that (as Fynes Moryson's *Itinerary* shows) both sexes, even among persons of high social class, were accustomed to go naked except for a mantle, especially in more remote parts of the country, until the seventeenth century. Wherever primitive races abandon nakedness for clothing, at once the tendency to disease, mortality, and degeneracy notably increases, though it must be remembered that the use of clothing is commonly accompanied by the introduction of other bad habits. "Nakedness is the only condition universal among vigorous and healthy savages; at every other point perhaps they differ", remarks Frederick Boyle in a paper ("Savages and Clothes," *Monthly Review*, Sept., 1905) in which he brings together much evidence concerning the hygienic advantages of the natural human state in which man is "all face."

It is in Germany that a return towards nakedness has been most ably and thoroughly advocated, notably by Dr. H. Pudor in his *Nackt Cultur*, and by R. Ungewitter in *Die Nacktheit* (first published in 1905), a book which has had a very large circulation in many editions. These writers enthusiastically advocate nakedness not only on hygienic but on moral and artistic grounds. Pudor insists more especially that "nakedness, both in gymnastics and in sport, is a method of cure and a method of regeneration;" he advocates co-education in this culture of nakedness. Although he makes large claims for nakedness—believing that all the nations which have disregarded these claims have speedily become decadent—Pudor is less hopeful than Ungewitter of any speedy victory over the prejudices opposed to the culture of nakedness. He considers that the immediate task is education and that a practical commencement may best be made with the foot which is specially in need of hygiene and exercise; a large part of the first volume of his book is devoted to the foot.

As the matter is to-day viewed by those educationalists who

are equally alive to sanitary and sexual considerations, the claims of nakedness, so far as concerns the young, are regarded as part alike of physical and moral hygiene. The free contact of the naked body with air and water and light makes for the health of the body; familiarity with the sight of the body abolishes petty prurencies, trains the sense of beauty and makes for the health of the soul. This double aspect of the matter has undoubtedly weighed greatly with those teachers who now approve of customs which a few years ago would have been hastily dismissed as "indecent." There is still a wide difference of opinion as to the limits to which the practice of nakedness may be carried, and also as to the age when it should begin to be restricted. The fact that the adult generation of to-day grew up under the influence of the old horror of nakedness is an inevitable check on any revolutionary changes in these matters.

Maria Lischnewska, one of the ablest advocates of the methodical enlightenment of children in matters of sex (*op. cit.*), clearly realizes that a sane attitude towards the body lies at the root of a sound education for life. She finds that the chief objection encountered in such education as applied in the higher classes of schools is "the horror of the civilized man at his own body." She shows that there can be no doubt that those who are engaged in the difficult task of working towards the abolition of that superstitious horror have taken up a moral task of the first importance.

Walter Gerhard, in a thoughtful and sensible paper on the educational question ("Ein Kapitel zur Erziehungsfrage, *Geschlecht und Gesellschaft*, Vol. I, Heft. II), points out that it is the adult who needs education in this matter—as in so many other matters of sexual enlightenment—considerably more than the child. Parents educate their children from the earliest years in prudery and vainly flatter themselves that they have thereby promoted their modesty and morality. He records his own early life in a tropical land and accustomed to nakedness from the first. "It was not till I came to Germany when nearly twenty, that I learnt that the human body is indecent, and that it must not be shown because that would 'arouse bad impulses.' It was not till the human body was entirely withdrawn from my sight and after I was constantly told that there was something improper behind clothes, that I was able to understand this. . . . Until then I had not known that a naked body, by the mere fact of being naked, could arouse erotic feelings. I had known erotic feelings, but they had not arisen from the sight of the naked body, but gradually blossomed from the union of our souls." And he draws the final moral: that, if only for the sake of our children, we must learn to educate ourselves.

Forel (*Die Sexuelle Frage*, p. 140), speaking in entirely the same sense as Gerhard, remarks that prudery may be either caused or cured in children. It may be caused by undue anxiety in covering their bodies and hiding from them the bodies of others. It may be cured by making them realize that there is nothing in the body that is unnatural and that we need be ashamed of, and by encouraging bathing of the sexes in common. He points out (p. 512) the advantages of allowing children to be acquainted with the adult forms which they will themselves some day assume, and condemns the conduct of those foolish persons who assume that children already possess the adult's erotic feelings about the body. That is so far from being the case that children are frequently unable to distinguish the sex of other children apart from their clothes.

At the Mannheim Congress of the German Society for Combating Venereal Diseases specially devoted to sexual hygiene the speakers constantly referred to the necessity of promoting familiarity with the naked body. Thus Eulenburg and Julian Marcus (*Sexualpädagogik*, p. 264), emphasized the importance of air-baths not only for the sake of the physical health of the young but in the interest of rational sexual training. Höller, a teacher, speaking at the same congress (*op. cit.* p. 85), after insisting on familiarity with the nude in art and literature, and protesting against the bowdlerising of poems for the young, continues: "By bathing-drawers ordinances no soul was ever yet saved from moral ruin. One who has learnt to enjoy peacefully the naked in art is only stirred by the naked in nature as by a work of art." Enderlin, another teacher, speaking in the same sense (p. 58), points out that nakedness cannot act sexually or immorally on the child since the sexual impulse has not yet become pronounced, and the earlier he is introduced to the naked in nature and in art, as a matter of course, the less likely are the sexual feelings to be developed precociously. The child thus, indeed, becomes immune to impure influences, so that, later, when representations of the nude are brought before him for the object of provoking his wantonness they are powerless to injure him. It is important, Enderlin adds, for familiarity with the nude in art to be learnt at school; for most of us, as Siebert remarks, have to learn purity through art.

Nakedness in bathing, remarks Bëlsche in his *Libesleben in der Natur* (vol. III, pp. 139 *et seq.*), we already in some measure possess; we need it in physical exercises, at first for the sexes separately; then, when we have grown accustomed to the idea, occasionally for both sexes together. We need to acquire the capacity to see the bodies of individuals of the other sex with such self-control and such natural instinct that they become

non-erotic to us and can be gazed at without erotic feeling. Art, he says, shows that this is possible in civilization. Science, he adds, comes to the aid of the same view.

Ungewitter (*Die Nacktheit*, p. 57) also advocates boys and girls engaging in play and gymnastics together, entirely naked in air-baths. "In this way", he believes, "the gymnasium would become a school of morality, in which young growing things would be able to retain their purity as long as possible through becoming naturally accustomed to each other. At the same time their bodies would be hardened and developed, and the perception of beautiful and natural forms awakened." To those who have any "moral" doubts on the matter he mentions the custom in remote country districts of boys and girls bathing together quite naked and without any sexual consciousness. Rudolf Sommer, similarly, in an excellent article entitled *Mädchenerziehung oder Menschenbildung?* (*Geschlecht und Gesellschaft*, Bd. I, Heft 3) advises that children should be made accustomed to each other's nakedness from an early age in the family life of the house or the garden, in games and especially in bathing: he remarks that parents having children of only one sex should cultivate for their children's sake intimate relations with a family having children of like age of the opposite sex, so that they may grow up together.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the cultivation of nakedness must always be conciliated with respect for the natural instincts of modesty. If the practice of nakedness led the young to experience a diminished reverence for their own or others' personalities the advantages of it would be too dearly bought. This is in part a matter of wholesome instinct, in part of wise training. We now know that the absence of clothes has little relation with the absence of modesty, such relation as there is being of the inverse order, for the savage races which go naked are usually more modest than those which wear clothes. The saying quoted by Herodotus in the early Greek world that "A woman takes off her modesty with her shift" was a favorite text of the Christian Fathers. But Plutarch, who was also a moralist, had already protested against it at the close of the Greek world: "By no means," he declared; "she who is modest clothes herself with modesty when she lays aside her tunic." "A woman may be naked," as Mrs. Bishop, the traveller, remarked to Dr. Baelz in Japan, "and yet behave like a lady."

The question is complicated among ourselves because established traditions of rigid concealment have fostered a prurieny which is an offensive insult to naked modesty. In many lands the women who are accustomed to be almost or quite naked in the presence of their own people cover themselves as

soon as they become conscious of the lustful inquisitive eyes of Europeans. Stratz refers to the prevalence of this impulse of offended modesty in Japan, and mentions that he himself failed to arouse it because he was a physician, and moreover, had long lived in another land (Java) where also the custom of nakedness prevails.<sup>1</sup> So long as this unnatural prurience exists a free unqualified nakedness is rendered difficult or impossible.

Modesty, is not, however, the only natural impulse which has to be considered in relation to the custom of nakedness. It seems probable that in cultivating the practice of nakedness we are not merely carrying out a moral and hygienic prescription but allowing legitimate scope to an instinct which at some periods of life, especially in adolescence, is spontaneous and natural, even, it may be, wholesomely based in the traditions of the race in sexual selection. Our rigid conventions make it impossible for us to discuss the laws of nature in this matter by stifling them at the outset. It may well be that there is a rhythmic harmony and concordance between impulses of modesty and impulses of nakedness, though we have done our best to disguise the natural law by our stupid and perverse by-laws.

Stanley Hall, who emphasizes the importance of nakedness, remarks that at puberty we have much reason to assume that in a state of nature there is a certain instinctive pride and ostentation that accompanies the new local development, and quotes the observation of Dr. Seerley that the impulse to conceal the sexual organs is especially marked in young men who are under-developed but not evident to those who are developed beyond the average. Stanley Hall (*Adolescence*, Vol. II, p. 97) also refers to the frequency with which not only "virtuous young men, but even women, rather glory in occasions when they can display the beauty of their forms without reserve, not only to themselves and to loved ones, but even to others with proper pretexts."

Many have doubtless noted this tendency, especially in women, and chiefly in those who are conscious of beautiful physical development. Madame Celine Renooz believes that the tendency corresponds to a really deep-rooted instinct in women little or not at all manifested in men who have consequently sought to impose artificially on women their own masculine conceptions of modesty. "In the actual life of the young girl to-day there is a moment when by a secret atavism she feels the pride of her sex, the intuition of her moral superiority and cannot understand why she must hide its cause. At this mo-

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Stratz: *Die Körperformen in Kunst und Leben der Japaner*, 2nd ed. ch. III; *id. Frauenkleidung*, 3rd ed., pp. 22, 30.

ment, wavering between the laws of nature and social conventions, she scarcely knows if nakedness should or should not affright her. A sort of confused atavistic memory recalls to her a period before clothing was known, and reveals to her as a paradisiacal ideal the customs of that human epoch." (Celine Renooz, *Psychologie Comparée de l'Homme et de la Femme*, pp. 85-87.)

From the point of view with which we are here essentially concerned there are three ways in which the cultivation of nakedness—so far as it is permitted by the slow education of public opinion—tends to exert an influence. (1) It is an important element in the sexual hygiene of the young, introducing a wholesome knowledge and incuriosity into a sphere once given up to prudery and pruriency; (2) The effect of nakedness is beneficial on those of more mature age, also, in so far as it tends to cultivate the sense of beauty and to furnish the tonic and consoling influences of natural vigor and grace; (3) The custom of nakedness, in its inception at all events, has a dynamic psychological influence also on morals, an influence exerted in the substitution of a strenuous and positive morality for the merely negative and timid morality which has ruled in this sphere.

Perhaps there are not many adults who realize the intense and secret absorption of thought in the minds of many boys and some girls concerning the problem of the physical conformation of the other sex, and the time, patience and intellectual energy which they are willing to expend on the solution of this problem. This is mostly effected in secret, but not seldom the secret impulse manifests itself with a sudden violence which in the blind eyes of the law is reckoned as crime. A German lawyer, Dr. Werthauer, has lately stated that if there were a due degree of familiarity with the natural organs and functions of the opposite sex ninety per cent. of the indecent acts of youths with girl children would disappear for in most cases these are not assaults but merely the innocent though uncontrollable outcome of a repressed natural curiosity. It is quite true that not a few children boldly enlist each other's co-operation in the settlement of the question and resolve it to their mutual satisfaction. But even this is not altogether satisfactory, for the end is not attained openly and wholesomely with a due subordination of the specifically sexual, but with a consciousness of wrong doing and an exclusive attentiveness to the merely physical fact which tend directly to develop sexual excitement. When familiarity with the naked body of the other sex is gained openly and with no consciousness of indecorum in the course of work and of play, in exercise or gymnastics, in running or in bathing, from a child's earliest years, no un-



wholesome results accompanying the familiarity with the essential facts of physical conformation thus naturally acquired. The prurience and prudery, which have poisoned sexual life in the past, are alike rendered impossible.

Nakedness has, however, a hygienic value, as well as a spiritual significance, far beyond its influences in allaying the natural inquisitiveness of the young or acting as a preventive of morbid emotion. It is an inspiration to adults who have long outgrown any youthful curiosities. The vision of the essential and eternal human form, the nearest thing to us in all the world, with its vigor and its beauty and its grace, is one of the prime tonics of life. "The power of a woman's body," said James Hinton, "is no more bodily than the power of music is a power of atmospheric vibrations." It is more than all the beautiful and stimulating things of the world, than flowers, or stars or the sea. History and legend and myth reveal to us the sacred and awful influence of nakedness, for, as Stanley Hall says, nakedness has always been "a talisman of wondrous power with gods and men." How sorely men crave for the spectacle of the human body—even to-day after generations have inculcated the notion that it is an indecorous and even disgusting spectacle—is witnessed by the eagerness with which they seek after the spectacle of even its imperfect and meretricious forms, although these certainly possess a heady and stimulating quality which can never be found in the pathetic simplicity of naked beauty. It was another spectacle when the queens of ancient Madagascar at the annual Fandroom, or feast of the bath, laid aside their royal robes and in the presence of their subjects who crowded the palace courtyard, descended the marble steps to the bath in complete nakedness. When we make our conventions of clothing rigid we at once spread a feast for lust and deny ourselves one of the prime tonics of life. "I was feeling in despair and walking despondently along a Melbourne street," writes the Australian author of a yet unpublished autobiography, "when three children came running out of a lane and crossed the road in full daylight. The beauty and texture of their legs in the open air filled me with joy, so that I forgot all my troubles whilst looking at them. It was a bright revelation, an unexpected glimpse of paradise, and I have never ceased to thank the happy combination of shape, pure blood and fine skin of these poverty-stricken children, for the wind seemed to quicken their golden beauty and I retained the rosy vision of their natural young limbs, so much more divine than those always under cover. Another occasion when naked young limbs made me forget all my gloom and despondency was on my first visit to Adelaide. I came on a naked boy leaning on the railing near the Baths,

and the beauty of his face, torso, fair young limbs and exquisite feet filled me with joy and renewed hope. The tears came to my eyes and I said to myself 'While there is beauty in the world I will continue to struggle.' "

We must, as Bölsche declares (*loc. cit.*), accustom ourselves to gaze on the naked human body exactly as we gaze at a beautiful flower, not merely with the pity with which the doctor looks at the body, but with joy in its strength and health and beauty. For a flower, as Bölsche truly adds, is not merely "naked body", it is the most sacred region of the body, the sexual organs of the plant.

"For girls to dance naked", said Hinton, "is the only truly pure form of dancing, and in due time it must therefore come about. This is certain: girls will dance naked and men will be pure enough to gaze on them." It has already been so in Greece, he elsewhere remarks, as it is to-day in Japan (as more recently described by Stratz). It is nearly forty years since these prophetic words were written, but Hinton himself would probably have been surprised at the progress which has already been slowly (for all true progress must be slow) towards this goal. Even on the stage new and more natural traditions are beginning to prevail in Europe. It is not many years since an English actress regarded as a calumny the statement that she appeared on the stage barefoot, and brought an action for libel, winning substantial damages. Such a result would scarcely be possible to-day. The movement in which Isadora Duncan was a pioneer has led to a partial disuse among dancers of the offensive device of tights, and it is no longer considered indecorous to show many parts of the body which it was formerly usual to cover.

Attempts have here and there been quietly made to cultivate a certain amount of mutual nakedness as between the sexes on remote country excursions. It is significant to find a record of such an experiment in Ungewitter's *Die Nacktheit*. In this case a party of people, men and women, would regularly every Sunday seek remote spots in woods or meadows where they would settle down, picnic, and enjoy games. "They made themselves as comfortable as possible, the men laying aside their coats, waistcoats, boots and socks, the women their blouses, skirts, shoes and stockings. Gradually as the moral conception of nakedness developed in their minds, more and more clothing fell away, until the men wore nothing but bathing drawers and the women only their chemises. In this 'costume' games were carried out in common, and a regular camp life led. The ladies (some of whom were unmarried) would then lie in hammocks and we men on the grass, and the intercourse was delightful. We felt as members of one family, and

behaved accordingly. In an entirely natural and unembarrassed way we gave ourselves up entirely to the liberating feelings aroused by this light and air bath, and passed these splendid hours in joyous singing and dancing, in wantonly childish fashion, freed from the burden of a false civilization. It was of course necessary to seek spots as remote as possible from high-roads, for fear of being disturbed. At the same time we by no means failed in natural modesty and consideration towards one another. Children, who can be entirely naked, may be allowed to take part in such meetings of adults and will thus be brought up free from morbid prudery." (R. Ungewitter, *Die Nacktheit*, p. 58.)

No doubt it may be said that the ideal in this matter is the possibility of permitting complete nakedness. This may be admitted, and it is undoubtedly true that our rigid police regulations do much to artificially foster a concealment in this matter which is not based on any natural instinct. Dr. Shufeldt narrates in his delightful *Studies of the Human Form* that once in the course of a photographic expedition in the woods he came upon two boys, naked except for bathing drawers, engaged in getting water lilies from a pond. He found them a good subject for his camera, but they could not be induced to remove their drawers, by no means out of either modesty or mock-modesty, but simply because they feared they might possibly be caught and arrested. We have to recognize that at the present day the general popular sentiment is not yet sufficiently educated to allow of public disregard for the convention of covering the sexual centres, and all attempts to extend the bounds of nakedness must show a due regard for this requirement. As concerns women Valentin Lehr, of Freiburg in Breisgau has invented a costume (figured in Ungewitter's *Die Nacktheit*) which is suitable for either public water-baths or air-baths, because it meets the demand of those whose minimum requirement is that the chief sexual centres of the body should be covered in public, while it is otherwise fairly unobjectionable. It consists of two pieces, made of porous material, one covering the breasts with a band over the shoulders, and the other covering the abdomen below the navel and drawn between the legs. This minimal costume while neither ideal nor æsthetic, adequately covers the sexual regions of the body, while leaving the arms, waist, hips and legs entirely free.

There finally remains the moral aspect of nakedness. Although this has been emphasized by many during the past half century it is still unfamiliar to the majority. The human body can never be a little thing. The wise educator may see to it that boys and girls are brought up in a natural

and wholesome familiarity with each other, but a certain terror and beauty must always attach to the spectacle of the body, a mixed attraction and repulsion. Because it has this force it naturally calls out the virtue of those who take part in the spectacle, and makes impossible any soft compliance to emotion. Even if we admit that the spectacle of nakedness is a challenge to passion it is still a challenge that calls out the ennobling qualities of self-control. It is but a poor sort of virtue that lies in fleeing into the desert from things that we fear may have in them a temptation. We cannot dispense with passions if we would: reason, as Holbach said, is the art of choosing the right passions, and education the art of sowing and cultivating them in human hearts. The spectacle of nakedness has its moral value in teaching us to learn to enjoy what we do not possess, a lesson which is an essential part of the training for any kind of fine social life. The child has to learn to look at flowers and not pluck them; the man has to learn to look at a woman's beauty and not desire to possess it. The joyous conquest over that "erotic kleptomania," as Ellen Key has well said, reveals the blossoming of a fine civilization. We fancy the conquest is difficult, even impossibly difficult. But it is not so. This impulse, like other human impulses, tends under natural conditions to develop temperately and wholesomely. We artificially press a stupid and brutal hand on it, and it is driven into the two unnatural extremes of repression and license, one extreme as foul as the other.

To those who have been bred under bad conditions, it may indeed seem hopeless to attempt to rise to the level of the Greeks and the other finer tempered peoples of antiquity in realizing the moral, as well as the pedagogic, hygienic and æsthetic advantages<sup>1</sup> of admitting into life the spectacle of the naked human body. But unless we do we hopelessly fetter ourselves in our march along the road of civilization, we deprive ourselves at once of a source of moral strength and of

<sup>1</sup> I have not considered it in place here to emphasize the æsthetic influence of familiarity with nakedness. The most æsthetic nations (notably the Greeks and the Japanese) have been those that preserved a certain degree of familiarity with the naked body. "In all arts," Maeterlinck remarks, "civilized peoples have approached or departed from pure beauty according as they approached or departed from the habit of nakedness." Ungewitter insists on the advantage to the artist of being able to study the naked body in movement, and it may be worth mentioning that Fidus (Hugo Höppener), the German artist of to-day who has exerted great influence by his fresh, powerful and yet reverent delineation of the naked human form in all its varying aspects, attributes his inspiration and vision to the fact that as a pupil of Diefenbach he was accustomed with his companions to work naked in the solitudes outside Munich which they frequented (F. Enzensberger, "Fidus," *Deutsche Kultur*, Aug., 1906).

joyous inspiration. Just as Wesley once asked why the devil should have all the best tunes, so to-day men are beginning to ask why the human body, the most divine melody at its finest moments that creation has yielded, should be allowed to become the perquisite of those who lust for the obscene. And they are further convinced that by enlisting it on the side of purity and strength they are raising the most powerful of all bulwarks against the invasion of a vicious conception of life and the consequent degradation of sex. These are considerations which we cannot longer afford to neglect, however great the opposition they arouse among the unthinking.

"Folk are afraid of such things rousing the passions," remarks Edward Carpenter. "No doubt the things may act that way. But why, we may ask, should people be afraid of rousing passions which, after all, are the great driving forces of human life?" It is true, the same writer continues, our conventional moral formulæ are no longer strong enough to control passion adequately, and that we are generating steam in a boiler that is cankered with rust. "The cure is not to cut off the passions, or to be weakly afraid of them, but to find a new, sound, healthy engine of general morality and common sense within which they will work." (Edward Carpenter, *Albany Review*, Sept., 1907.)

So far as I am aware, however, it was James Hinton who chiefly sought to make clear the possibility of a positive morality on the basis of nakedness, beauty, and sexual influence, regarded as dynamic forces which when suppressed make for corruption and when wisely used serve to inspire and ennoble life. He worked out his thoughts on this matter in MSS., written from about 1870 to his death two years later, which, never having been prepared for publication, remain in a fragmentary state and have not been published. I quote a few brief characteristic passages: "Is not," he wrote, "the Hindu refusal to see a woman eating strangely like ours to see one naked? The real sensuality of the thought is visibly identical. . . . Suppose, because they are delicious to eat, pineapples were forbidden to be seen, except in pictures, and about that there was something dubious. Suppose no one might have sight of a pineapple unless he were rich enough to purchase one for his particular eating, the sight and the eating being so indissolubly joined. What lustfulness would surround them, what constant pruriency, what stealing! . . . Miss — told us of her Syrian adventure and how she went into a wood-carver's shop and he would not look at her; and how she took up a tool and worked, till at last he looked, and they both burst out laughing. Will it not be even so with our looking at women altogether? There will come a *work*—and at last

we shall look up and both burst out laughing. . . . When men see truly what is amiss, and act with reason and forethought, in respect to the sexual relations, will they not insist on the enjoyment of women's beauty by youths, and from the earliest age that the first feeling may be of beauty? Will they not say, 'We must not allow the false purity, we must have the true? The false has been tried, and it is not good enough; the power purely to enjoy beauty must be gained, attempting to do with less is fatal! Every instructor of youth shall say: 'This beauty of woman, God's chief work of beauty, it is good for you to see it; it is a pleasure that serves good; all beauty serves it, and above all this, for its office is to make you pure. Come to it as you come to daily bread, or pure air, or the cleansing bath: this is pure to you if you be pure, it will aid you in your effort to be so. But if any of you are impure, and make of it the feeder of impurity, then you should be ashamed and pray; it is not for you our life can be ordered; it is for men and not for beasts.' This must come when men open their eyes, and act coolly and with reason and forethought, and not in mere panic, in respect to the sexual passion in its moral relations.'